



Representative Lamar, Senator Cohen and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Jim Gildea, and I am the Chairman of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council. I am offering written testimony IN SUPPORT OF:

RAISED BILL NUMBER 1078

AN ACT AN ACT CONCERNING RAIL SERVICE.

I offer testimony in support of **Raised Bill 1078** because as Chair of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, we understand how critical it is for both commuters, the environment and economic development to bring the service level up to where it had been pre Covid.

With regards to the Shore Line East service level, this is the only branch or line that has been not brought back to pre-Covid service levels. Although ridership will be cited as the reason, it's important to know all other lines were brought back to 100% without that same increase in ridership requirement.

Subsidies are also cited as a reason why the line should not receive its full schedule attainment. I feel this is tremendously misleading for several reasons. First, this subsidy they cite is based on this reduced ridership which is a reduced ridership they do nothing to increase. Certainly, and unequivocally one of the best ways to lower the subsidy level of that line is to attract more riders. By making the line more attractive to commuters and getting them to use it as they had pre Covid would in fact reduce subsidies.

Another issue, and perhaps more importantly, we live in a society where government subsidizes a fair amount of our daily life. That comes in the form of public education, trash collection, police protection, fire protection, paid family medical, leave act, Medicare, Medicaid, roads and highways and so on. Very rarely does anybody question the subsidy amounts of so many helpful programs we offer. It is done, simply because it is good government. Public transportation is no different. We have an obligation to provide quality public transportation. The only time subsidies are ever mentioned, when discussing government, is when bureaucrats don't want to offer a service. Plain and simple.

Finally, we understand that in some fashion, this about getting the communities along the Shore Line East, to change their zoning laws to add more housing closer to the rail stations. We believe that these 2 issues should be separated, and we should focus on the environmental, economic and commuting benefits separate from the desire to change the zoning laws.

Jim Gildea
Chairman, Connecticut Commuter Rail Council